

## MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

### I.—OBSERVATIONS ON THE GREY MUSK SHREW (*SUNCUS CÆRULEUS*).

It is commonly accepted that this common shrew is mainly insectivorous, but though it feeds largely on insects, it also includes meat, bread and other dainties from the human larder in its menu. It also feeds on refuse and small creatures that it can overpower.

The distress call of a Bull-Frog (*Rana tigrina*), presumably caught by a snake, attracted my attention late one night. Out I went to investigate. On reaching the spot I was surprised to find that the frog had been caught by a Grey Musk Shrew (*S. cæruleus*). The shrew held the frog down firmly and was chewing at its spinal column at the base of the skull. To my mind, the shrew's capture of the frog, was due partly to the frog's 'foolish' habit of sitting still and partly to the agility of the shrew. A frog will often sit quite still and allow itself to be gently touched before it will leap away. The frog was about four inches from snout to vent and the tables might just as well have been reversed, as these frogs are quite capable of swallowing shrews and other small mammals. This statement is supported by actual experience. In the *F.B.I.* (Mammalia), p. 237, Blanford writes, 'Sterndale quotes from the *Asian* an account of a shrew that attacked a large frog.'

As nothing appears to be recorded (vide *F.B.I.*, l.c) of the breeding habits of this shrew, I mention such instances as I have observed. The main breeding season, in Salsette Island, appears to be during the monsoon months, when food is plentiful. I have taken naked young from the nest in June, half grown young in July and August, and females with foetuses during July, August and September. The number at a birth varies from two to four the latter number being rarely, if ever, exceeded. A rude nest of dry leaves, paper, rags or other oddments is constructed. In the collecting of the nesting material both parents take part. At nesting time, shrews are particularly destructive; this I learnt to my cost as a pair of shrews destroyed some of my manuscripts and other papers, bits of which I later found in the nest. Outside the breeding season they do little or no damage. The nest is usually secreted in a corner among rubbish, in a trunk or in a drawer. It is surprising what a narrow slit will admit them. The young do not leave the nest till about three-quarters grown.

When unmolested, this shrew becomes quite fearless. During the rains one frequently visited my writing table while I was at it and collected the insects that were attracted to the light. The particular individual had two young in a box behind my table.

On the whole it is a useful creature about the house.

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